



CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE COST ESTIMATE

March 19, 1999

H.R. 472

Local Census Quality Check Act

As ordered reported by the House Committee on Government Reform on March 17, 1999

During the decennial census in 1990, local governments had the opportunity to review household counts, jurisdictional boundaries, and other data to identify potential problems before the Bureau of the Census finalized the tabulation of total population. H.R. 472 would require the bureau to provide that opportunity to local governments for the 2000 census and all future decennial censuses. The bill also would require the bureau to investigate any discrepancies identified by local governments.

CBO estimates that implementing H.R. 472 would cost between \$10 million and \$20 million in 2000, assuming appropriation of the necessary amount. Allowing local governments to review the census cost about \$10 million in 1990, when about 10,000 out of nearly 40,000 local governments participated. Although inflation and population growth since 1990 would make this program more expensive, participation could be higher or lower than it was in 1990. H.R. 472 also would increase the costs of all future decennial censuses.

The extent of participation in a post-census review under H.R. 472 is very uncertain. On the one hand, participation in 2000 could be lower than in 1990 because the Bureau of the Census provided local governments with an opportunity to review the address list before the 2000 census, and according to the bureau, about five times as many local governments are participating in this review as participated in the pre-census review in 1990. In addition, the bureau plans to ask local governments to identify housing constructed during the last four months prior to the census. Thus, a post-census review could be viewed as unnecessary, and fewer local governments might choose to participate. On the other hand, the National League of Cities believes that local governments are very interested in the census and that participation in a post-census review would be higher than in 1990.

H.R. 472 would not affect direct spending or receipts; therefore, pay-as-you-go procedures would not apply. H.R. 472 contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act. Any costs incurred by local or tribal governments would be voluntary.

The CBO staff contact is Mark Hadley. This estimate was approved by Robert A. Sunshine, Deputy Assistant Director for Budget Analysis.